

REMARKS

Claims 1-14 stand rejected under § 103 on the basis of Kikuchi and Kon. Applicants traverse this rejection because the references do not disclose or suggest, alone or in combination, the claimed storage medium, which has use permission discrimination information and use limit information. Moreover, the references do not disclose or suggest the prior collation of the use permission discrimination information, or whether the use limit information indicates the access allowed condition or the access not-allowed condition. If a result of the collation is positive in the present invention, the access not-allowed condition can be changed to the access allowed condition.

Kikuchi discloses a data storage apparatus which extracts a host address from a host command in order to recognize a host device, collates the extracted host address with a host address registered in an address registration unit, and executes the command if the collation confirms that these host addresses coincide with one another.

On the other hand, unlike Kikuchi, the storage apparatus of the present invention does not collate the host address of the host command with the host address stored in the disc device immediately upon receipt of the host command, so as to recognize the host device. Instead, with the present invention, regardless of the kind of host device, in order to determine whether the storage medium is the one with use limitation or not, the use limit information stored in the storage medium is read out, to thereby detect whether the read-out use limit information indicates the access allowed condition or the access not-allowed condition. When it is detected that the use limit information indicates the access not-allowed

condition, the use permission discrimination information stored in the storage medium is collated with the use permission discrimination information for a comparison purpose.

Thus, with the present invention, for the purpose of improvement in security, the storage medium itself has the use permission discrimination information and the use limit information, and in the case where the use limit information indicates the access not-allowed condition, a collation processing is executed. Further, what is collated is the use permission discrimination information stored in the storage medium itself and the use permission discrimination information for comparison purposes. Kikuchi does not disclose nor suggest the aforementioned features.

Kon discloses a data storage apparatus which has a counter for REL of the flash memory, decrements the number of counts for erasure, and prohibits access when the number of counts becomes “0”. However, in Kon, what is rewritten in the counter, which corresponds to the use limit information of the present invention, is the number of counts for counting the remaining-expected-lifetime. This is different from the present invention, in which the use limit information indicative of the access not-allowed condition is rewritten to indicate the access allowed condition.

Further, Kon discloses that, when the number of counts in the counter becomes “0” by re-writing, the access allowed condition is changed to the access not-allowed condition, namely, it is determined that the flash memory cannot be used. This is different from the present invention, in which the use limit information indicative of the access not-

allowed condition is rewritten to indicate the access allowed condition, to make it possible to access the data stored in the storage medium.

Accordingly, the present invention is different from each of Kikuchi and Kon. Even if Kikuchi and Kon were combined with one another, such a combination would not disclose nor suggest the subject matter of the present invention. Withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

For the foregoing reasons, applicants believe that this case is in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested. The examiner should call applicants' attorney if an interview would expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

GREER, BURNS & CRAIN, LTD.

By 
Patrick G. Burns
Registration No. 29,367

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300 South Wacker Drive
Suite 2500
Chicago, Illinois 60606
Telephone: 312.360.0080
Facsimile: 312.360.9315
Customer No. 24978